

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6040

INFO AMEMBASSY KIGALI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0286

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, BY

SUBJ: IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAM OF BAGAZA REGIME

1. OTHER CABLES HAVE COVERED SPECIFIC TOPICS OF MY MARCH 17 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BAGAZA, BUT THERE REMAIN SEVERAL OTHER POINTS WHICH DESERVE RECORDING.

2. WHILE DISCUSSING THE SHABA SITUATION AND NOTING THE TRIBAL AND FACTIONAL DISSENSIONS ENDEMIC TO AFRICAN COUNTRIES, BAGAZA SAID THAT THE SAME APPLIED TO BURUNDI. IN FACT, THE ETHNIC TENSIONS HERE HAD PRODUCED UNLIMITED VIOLENCE, AND HE COULD NOT RPT NOT EXCLUDE THAT IT WOULD HAPPEN AGAIN. I COMMENTED (AND REITERATED IT AGAIN TOWARD THE END OF THE MEETING) THAT HE HAD COURAGEOUSLY BROUGHT THE ISSUE OF ETHNIC HATRED AND DISCRIMINATION OUT INTO THE OPEN. HE HAD TOURED THE COUNTRY THROUGHLY IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY TO PREACH THE MESSAGE OF ETHNIC RECONCILIATION AND A NEW NATIONAL START. I HOPED THAT HE WOULD REPEAT THIS PROCEDURE PERIODICALLY. CERTAINLY, THERE WRE STILL LOCAL OFFICIALS TO BE FOUND WHO DID NOT SHARE BAZAZA'S FORWARD LOOKING POLICIES. THEY HAD TO BE PRESSURED REPEATEDLY TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON HIS COMMITMENT. THIS WAS A MAKE OR BREAK ELEMENT FOR BURUNDI AS A NATION, FOR ALL OF HIS EFFORTS AND ALL OF THE GOOD WILL AND HELP OF FOREIGN DONORS

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WOULD MEAN ABSOLUTELY NOTHING IF ETHNIC VIOLENCE BROKE OUT AGAIN. I WAS SURE THAT WITH HIS DEDICATION TO SOCIAL JUSTICE AND A FAIR BREAK FOR ALL, ESPECIALLY THOSE MOST DISADVANTAGED IN THE PAST, THERE WOULD BE NO REPETITION OF THE 1972 VIOLENCE AND EARLIER OUTBREAKS.

3. AT ANOTHER POINT IN THE TALK, I SAID THAT, SPEAKING PERSONALLY,

I THOUGHT HIS REGIME'S PROGRAM FOR THE COUNTRY WAS EXCELLENT. IT SOUGHT ETHNIC JUSTICE, MASS ECONOMIC BETTERMENT, HONESTY IN PUBLIC LIFE, AND THE PROMOTION OF A TRUE PATRIOTIC SPIRIT. I DID NOT SHARE THE VIEWS OF SOME EUROPEANS THAT BURUNDI WAS HEADED FOR SOCIALISM OR LEFTIST EXPERIMENTS. HOWEVER, I HAD TO ADD THAT THERE WERE SOME INSTANCES WHICH HAD SEEMED TO SHOW XENOPHOBIC TENDENCIES, OR AN ARBITRARY AND ONE-SIDED APPLICATION OF THE NEW PROGRAM. THESE INCIDENTS (HE KNEW I WAS REFERRING TO THE EXPULSION OF A DANISH BUSINESSMAN LAST WEEK) WERE PSYCHOLOGICALLY UNSETTLING FOR THE FOREIGN BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND DILUTED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE ADMIRABLE PRINCIPLES IN HIS NEW PROGRAM.

4. BAGAZA SAID THAT HE APPRECIATED MY REMARKS, SINCE I WAS THE FIRST FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVE TO HAVE SAID SPECIFICALLY THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES WERE PRAISEWORTHY. STILL HE WANTED TO ASSURE ME THAT BURUNDI WAS NEITHER TURNING TOWARD THE LEFT NOR XENOPHOBIC. HOW COULD A POOR LANDLOCKED NATION, DEPENDENT ON NEIGHBORS AND THE REST OF THE WORLD FOR EVERYTHING, BE ANTI-FOREIGN? HE DID NOT APOLOGIZE FOR ANY PAST REGIME ACTIONS, BUT HE STRESSED AGAIN THAT HE WANTED THE PRIVATE BUSINESS COMMUNITY TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN BUILDING UP BURUNDI, JUST AS HE WELCOMED ASSISTANCE FROM ALL GOVERNMENTS. HE WAS PLEASED BY WHAT HE KNEW SO FAR OF THE POLICIES OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION IN AFRICA.

MARK

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